WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image processing method comprising the steps of:

preliminarily setting a plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics of image information;

selecting one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics from said plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics; and

compressing or expanding gradation of said image information using the thus selected one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics.

2. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are preliminarily set in accordance with at least one of an original type, an original size and an analysis result of said image information.

3. The image processing method according to claim 1,

wherein said one or more basic compression characteristics or a plurality of basic expansion characteristics are selected in accordance with at least one of an original type, an original size and an analysis result of said image information.

4. The image processing method according to claim 2, wherein said original type is at least one of a negative film, a reversal film and a black-and-white film, and wherein said original size is at least one of a 135 size, a 240 size and a 120/220 size.

5. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are selected by a manual operation.

6. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are provided as a parameter or a look-up table.

7. The image processing method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of analyzing said image

information, wherein the step of compressing or expanding gradation of said image information using said selected one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics comprises the steps of:

setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding the gradation of said image information using said selected one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics in accordance with said analysis result; and

processing said image information in accordance with the thus set processing condition.

8. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein the step of compressing or expanding the gradation of said image information using said selected one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics comprises the steps of:

setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding the gradation of said image information using said selected one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics by a manual operation; and

processing said image information in accordance

with the thus set processing condition.

9. The image processing method according to claim 7, wherein said processing condition is set as a look-up table.

10. An image processing method comprising the steps of:

preliminarily setting a plurality of basic compression characteristics or a plurality of basic expansion characteristics;

selecting one or more basic compression characteristics or one or more basic expansion characteristics from said plurality of basic compression characteristics or said plurality of basic expansion characteristics;

analyzing image information;

setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding gradation of said image information using the thus selected one or more basic compression characteristics or the thus selected one or more basic expansion characteristics in accordance with an analysis result obtained by thus analyzing the image information; and

processing said image information in accordance with the thus set processing condition.

11. An image processing method comprising the steps of:

preliminarily setting a plurality of basic compression characteristics or a plurality of basic expansion characteristics;

selecting one or more basic compression characteristics or one or more basic expansion characteristics from said plurality of basic compression characteristics or said plurality of basic expansion characteristics;

setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding gradation of image information using the thus selected one or more basic compression characteristics or the thus selected one or more basic expansion characteristics by an manual operation; and

processing said image information in accordance with the thus set processing condition.

12. An image processing apparatus comprising:

a selecting device for selecting one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion

characteristics from preliminarily set plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics for use in compressing or expanding gradation of image information supplied by an image information supply source; and

an image processing device for compressing or expanding the gradation of said image information using said one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics selected by said selecting device.

13. The image processing apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising:

a setting section for analyzing the image information and setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding the gradation of said image information using said one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics selected by said selecting device in accordance with an analyzing result obtained by thus analyzing the image information,

wherein said image processing device processes said image information in accordance with the processing condition set by said setting section.

14. The image processing apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising:

a setting section for setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding the gradation of said image information by a manual operation using said one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics selected by said selecting device,

wherein said image processing device processes said image information in accordance with the processing condition set by said setting section.

15. The image processing apparatus according to claim 12,

wherein said selecting device selects said one or more basic compression characteristic or basic expansion characteristics in accordance with at least one of an original type of an image as an image information source, an original size of the image as the image information source and an analysis result of said image information.